THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is presently organised by the Government under a bilateral arrangement with the Chinese Government through the Lipulekh Pass in Pithoragarh, Uttaranchal, for which Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN) makes the necessary logistical arrangements on the Indian side, while the arragements on the Chinese side are looked after the the Chinese authorities. There has been marginal increase over the years in the amount charged by KMVN and the Chinese side from the pilgrims, which is essentially due to increased cost of maintenance of facilities and improvements in amenities being provided to the pilgrims during the Yatra.

(b) and (c) Government pay Rs. 3,250/- (rupees Three thousand two hundred and fifty) for each pilgrim to KMVN for arrangements made by KMVN for the Yatra. In addition, during the course of the Yatra, facilities provided by the Government to the pilgrims include free medical assistance, security and escort cover by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) till the Lipulekh Pass on the Indian side, communication links with China, and provision of satellite phone to the Liaison Officer for each batch of pilgrims for use during emergency throughout the Yatra.

A Liaison Officer is attached by the Government with each batch of pilgrims, who is responsible for their general welfare.

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and Haj are essentially different so far as the number of pilgrims, mode of travel and the nature of terrain are involved. Therefore, there may not be a direct comparison between the two.

Return of Taliban in Afghanistan

2768. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are monitoring the reported return of Taliban elements in Afghanistan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the country participated in the recent meeting in London on the reconstruction of Afghanistan;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether Government have ascertained the conclusions of the said meeting; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes.

(b) Over the last few months, there has been an escalation in the activities of anti-Afghan Government elements, which includes the Taliban.

(c) Yes,

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Yes.

(f) At the London Conference, a five-year development strategy called Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy was approved for implementation in accordance with the Afghanistan Compact agreed upon between the Afghan Government and the international community. The international donors announced new pledges of US $ 10.5 billion for the implementation of the strategy over the next five-year period. Government of India pledged an additional sum of US $ 50 million for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Committee for monitoring T.V. channels

2769. SHRI N.R. GOVINDRAJAR: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have appointed a Committee for suggesting ways for monitoring television channels;

(b) if so, whether the Committee has submitted its recommendations;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the follow up action taken by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) to (d) Government has constituted a Committee on 03.10.2005 to review the Programme Code and Advertising